

# Lost Gonzaga blanket found its way home after five decades

By Bill Reynolds

Warm and fuzzy stories are rare these days.

But, thanks to former Skagit County Pioneer Association President John Kamb, Jr, the Weekly News has one, both literally and figuratively.

This story details the discovery and return of a long-lost embroidered Gonzaga University letterman's blanket issued more than 80 years ago to Bulldog basketball player Wayne Yager.

Kamb, a Mount Vernon attorney, was in Portland earlier this month for Gonzaga's NCAA West Region Basketball Tournament and was able to see Yager's daughter, Lynette Hansen, open a mailed package containing the blanket that had been missing since her father's death in 1972.

A Gonzaga alum and avid history hobbyist who specializes in presidential and sports collectibles, Kamb uncovered the location of the lost blanket through determination.

"I'm always checking on websites and e-bay for whatever Gonzaga memorabilia comes up," Kamb told the Weekly News. "It was when I was on e-bay that I saw this Gonzaga blanket for sale for \$500, and it was a really cool blanket."

The seller, Ben Rarick, didn't have a lot of information on the blanket.

"He bought the blanket at an estate sale in Dunnigan, California," Kamb said, "and thinks he paid \$75."

Kamb's interest was piqued. "The more I looked at it," Kamb said, "I started to wonder why something like this would be on e-bay. My thinking was that it would be a family heirloom."

Kamb immediately noticed that the name Wayne Yager was embroidered on the blanket. For the lifelong sports enthusiast, that was enough to get the ball rolling.

Kamb began doing research on Wayne Yager and found some photos of him playing basketball at Gonzaga in 1938, 1939, and 1940. He also found archived news articles of when he was on the team and learned that he was named captain in 1940.

Yager had received the blanket, which sports three stars, at an annual Gonzaga athletics awards banquet. Kamb said each star represents a year that Yager lettered in basketball. One of the stars is gold, representing the season Yager was the Bulldogs' captain.

While conducting his research, Kamb also came across another piece of the puzzle.

"There was a message that I saw on a Gonzaga fan page from somebody who said her father played there in the 1930s," Kamb

said.

That somebody turned out to be Hansen.

Kamb found her Facebook account and messaged her. He said: "I don't know if you realize this, but your father's letterman's blanket is on e-bay."

She responded immediately and wanted to know more.

Hansen's dad, an administrator and basketball coach at Kennebec High School, died suddenly from a heart attack while she was still in school. Her mom passed away not long after. Many of their personal possessions, including the Gonzaga letterman's blanket, were sold in an estate sale.

"She never knew what happened to the blanket," Kamb said. "She remembered it as a child."

But there was one problem. Hansen was vacationing in the Caribbean and had no access to e-bay.

Kamb told her not to worry and that he would take care of it. He reached out to Rarick and filled him in on the blanket's family history.

"I asked him what he'd take for the blanket," said Kamb.

Rather than taking payment, Rarick said he would gift it back to Hansen. Sure enough, when she returned from her trip, a parcel was awaiting her.

"Rarick is the real hero of the



COMFORTING GESTURE - Lynette Hansen was able to recover her late father's Gonzaga University letterman's blanket through John Kamb, Jr. (left). They showed the blanket to Gonzaga fans attending the NCAA West Region basketball game

-Photo courtesy of John Kamb, Jr.

story," Kamb said.

Hansen didn't open the package right away, instead choosing to do so when she, Kamb, Rarick, and Gonzaga fans gathered at the Moda Center in Portland for the Bulldogs' first-round NCAA tourney contest with Georgia State. She proudly

waved the blanket during the game, a 93-72 Gonzaga triumph.

Some questions remain unanswered, such as how the Gonzaga blanket wound up in California. But one thing's for certain. The blanket is back where it belongs.

# Decision near for new curriculum

By Bill Reynolds

La Conner Schools are looking to adopt a new math curriculum intended to better match student learning styles, emphasize development of problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and improve standardized achievement test scores.

District librarian Beth Clothier told school board members during their hybrid meeting Monday night that a final staff recommendation on which curriculum to select for La Conner's respective campuses should be presented to the panel at its April 25 session.

"We have a couple favorites," Clothier said, "but we're doing our due diligence."

The current timeline is for a new curriculum to be chosen at

the elementary and secondary levels this spring, followed by professional development for teachers to familiarize them with the material prior to instruction next year.

The professional development component will be essential, board president Susie Gardner Deyo said.

"It won't be successful unless we train all our teachers well," she noted.

Clothier said the district math adoption team is looking at four potential curricula to purchase. She said two of those will be selected to bring to the board April 11 following receipt of additional staff input.

"That," she told board members, "will give you a chance to ask some questions. Then we'll come back to you with a final

recommendation on April 25."

Board members viewed student test score data presented by District Director of Special Programs Andy Wheeler.

"We are going to invest in math," Deyo said. "We're going to put the data behind our action and money to bring student math scores up."

La Conner Schools Superintendent Will Nelson said that in addition to acquiring a new math curriculum, the district next year will hire a "math teacher on special assignment" to circulate among classrooms to provide added instructional support.

"Teachers are collaborating to develop lessons together," Nelson pointed out. "There are a number of things we're looking at next year for extra teaching time and teaching differently."

# Braves fall short at Coupeville

By Bill Reynolds

The La Conner High School baseball team was late to the chase in NW2B/1B baseball action at Coupeville last Tuesday.

The Braves fell behind early to Coupeville, who took a 7-0 lead despite a late La Conner push across eight runs over the final two innings.

In the end, the Wolves posted an 18-8 victory.

La Conner fell 0-2, both conference setbacks. The Braves, scheduled at Orcas yesterday, resume NW2B/1B play this Friday when they entertain Concrete at 4 p.m.

Despite their loss at Coupeville, head coach Jeremiah LeSourd felt his team made strides against the Wolves.

"We came into the game with three goals," LeSourd told the Weekly News. "I wanted to make sure each of our pitchers who didn't pitch in game one (a 7-0 loss at Darrington) got an appearance on the mound to help them relax and gain confidence."

"I also wanted us to be aggressive offensively and defensively," he said.

Nathan Bailey led off a six-run La Conner fourth with a single. As La Conner batted around in the frame, Bailey would also join C.J. Edwards, Kamien Lopez, and Mason Wilson in drawing walks during the rally.

Haydin Dinuis, Cameron Burks, and Logan Burks highlighted La Conner's big inning by lashing run-scoring singles.

The Braves weren't done there. They tacked on another two runs in the fifth inning.

"The young guys," LeSourd said of the Braves' underclassmen, "have fire in their bellies and stood up for the older guys. It was exciting to see."

LeSourd praised his players for playing with energy and confidence.

"In the end we came up short," he said. "We can learn from the experience and build on it. They have it in them to be successful."

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